

DIE KASTEN-KLASSENPROBLEMATIK IM STÄDTISCH-
INDUSTRIELLEN BEREICH. HISTORISCH-EMPIRISCHE
FALLSTUDIE ÜBER DIE INDUSTRIESTADT KANPUR,
UTTAR PRADESH, INDIEN.

Abhandlung
zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde
der Philosophischen Fakultät I
der
Universität Zürich

vorgelegt von
Maren Bellwinkel
von Bad Godesberg/BRD

1981

Angenommen auf Antrag von Herrn Prof. Dr. Lorenz G. Löffler

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SUMMARY

The following account is a contribution to the caste-class controversy in urban-industrial India. The data were collected during a field trip to Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh, India in 1973/1974, just twenty years after B.S.Cohn (1954) conducted his field work among Jaisvara Camar in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. The comparison between the rural and urban situation of the Jaisvara Camar is the main focus of this book, as it endeavours to show the impact of industrialization and urbanization on this very group.

The theoretical framework is derived from the caste theory of Louis Dumont (1970, 1972) and the historical-materialist approach of Karl Marx (MEW Bd. 3, 4, 8, 13, 23, 25). These two theories are contradictory in their approach; for Louis Dumont only ideology explains the structural principle of Indian society, whereas for Karl Marx the economy is of utmost importance. Louis Dumont (1977) even labels Marxism as the apotheosis of individualist/economistic thinking of the West, which according to his interpretation is just the opposite of the holistic/hierarchical ideology of the East. The use of two contradictory sets of theories is justified by Louis Dumont's epistemological consideration, that sociological theories cannot go beyond the basic principle of the very society they are derived from. If it is true that Louis Dumont's caste theory is in accordance with the structural principle of Indian society, then it cannot explain the capitalistic sector of Indian society. As Karl Marx historical materialism is developed as a parameter of industrial revolution in Europe, Marxism should help to explain the industrial reality in Kanpur.

The first chapter also deals briefly with the shortcomings of marxist interpretations of Indian agrarian structure, as they assume a congruence between ritual and economic status which is not the fact. Another set of middle range theories tries to explain the changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization through the use of heuristical models. "Westernization", "Sanskritization", "Compartmentalization" illustrate the phenomenon but do not explain the direction of social change. Only Marriott (1976) in his critique of Louis Dumont's "dualistic" caste theory shows that even in preindustrial India there were four different models of social change according to the four varnas which allow classifying seemingly new features of social change as an indigenous expression of Indian social structure.

As the first chapter deals with theory on a rather abstract level, the second chapter takes a generalized view of Kanpur's industrial development. Kanpur is one of the first industrial cities in India.

It owes its industrial development, in contrast to Bombay and Ahmedabad entirely to British capital. In 1778 Kanpur became a British garrison. The cantonment attracted Indian merchants, craftsmen and labourers, who built a town of their own beyond the boundaries of the cantonment. Although most of the British inhabitants of Kanpur were killed during the mutiny 1857/58, the British came back with new zeal and industrial development started with the opening of the Elgin Mill in 1864. A number of leather and textile factories all owned by British capital followed in short succession. Although there were a number of rich and experienced Indian banking houses and merchants in Kanpur, Indian capital opened other than temporary factories after the depression, when imperial policy gave trade and financial preferences to its nascent industry. Bagchi (1972) explains the rather late foundation of factories by Indian capital through the systematic discrimination of Indians in trade and industry by imperialist politics and bureaucracy.

Before the mutiny, Indian labourers- mostly untouchables- were employed in leather manufacture, which supplied goods according to the demands of the garrison. The first labourers who were attracted by the newly founded textile and leather factories were Camar, Kori and Julaha from the adjacent districts. Their traditional profession as leather workers and hand weavers fitted well the skill demanded by the new industry. From the very beginning of Kanpur's industrial development there was a small but continuously increasing percentage of Brahmins and upper castes among Kanpur's industrial workers. Labour recruiters were the so called "mistries", who worked as foremen in industry. They were Kori, Brahmin and Thakur. Kanpur's mistries never developed as much power and influence as Bombay's "jobbers". The composition of the labour force changed during the 1930 ties as Kanpur's entrepreneurs preferentially recruited untouchables from Eastern U.P. with the intention to break the stronghold of Brahmin industrial workers in the trade union movement.

Kanpur's first union, the Kanpur Mazdur Sabha was founded in 1918. At that time nationalist politics and the trade union movement went together. Most of the trade union leaders were upper caste outsiders of middle class origin. Although the Muslim constituted between 20% and 30% of the total industrial labour force, they were not adequately represented in the trade union movement. This was due to the influence of the Arya Samaj and Hindu Nationalism on the Congress Party and trade union movement in Kanpur. This alienation of the Muslim from the nationalist movement led to the murderous Hindu Muslim riots in 1931 which severely challenged the solidarity of the working class. As a consequence the Communists increased the agitation among Muslims and they managed to win most of them for their newly founded mill

and ahata committees. This grass-root organization worked well, as the communists managed to get elected to the executive committee of the KMS in 1938 which was a triumph over their old rivals, the Congress Socialists.

Nicholas (1968) and Brass (1965) consider factionalism to be the dominant model of political alliance in rural and urban India. This thesis holds true for most phases of Kanpur's trade union movement, as the middle class origin of Kanpur's trade union leaders led to constant rivalry and a split of the trade union movement. In 1972 a total of 354 trade unions were registered in Kanpur. But during two phases of militant strikes in 1937/38 and 1955 it came to a pragmatical unity of Kanpur's trade unions. The strikes were dominated by the communist trade union and unskilled workers, untouchables and even women showed great militancy. As the middle class trade union leaders did not want to loose their following, they quickly merged into the overall trend. These two phases of militancy were an outcome of trade union consciousness, according to the classification derived from Deppe (1971), Meszaros (1972) and Miliband (1972). Kanpur's trade union movement was characterized by factionalism and militant trade unionism.

The third chapter deals with the intricacies of field work and data collection. Maheshganj ahata is an urban slum which is privately owned by an extended merchant family. The ahata was built between 1924 to 1929. Most of its inhabitants are Hindu who fled their former mohallas during the Hindu-Muslim riots in 1931. A total of 352 flats, houses and shops are inhabited by approximately 1500 people. One-hundredeightythree flats have electricity and running water, 169 flats are without. There is a close correlation between size of the flat, fittings, rent and its respective inhabitants: The larger flats with better equipment are mostly inhabited by higher castes who are in white collar jobs, whereas the flats without electricity and running water belong to the industrial workers and untouchables.

The fourth chapter describes the caste and class composition of Maheshganj ahata. A total of 395 households- defined as commensal and economic units- inhabit the 352 flats and shops. Twentysix different castes and two religious sects can be distinguished. One-hundredfiftyfour households belong to the seven upper castes, the 13 middle castes constitute 49 households and the 16 untouchable castes comprise of 181 households. The Jaisvara Camar are with 148 households the numerically strongest caste, followed by 57 households of Kayastha and 55 households of Brahmins. The demographical composition of Maheshganjs ahata corresponds with the Indian village: 26 different castes follow a total of 53 different professions and occupations. Two-thirds of all heads of the households are of rural origin, mostly

from Eastern U.P.. Kayastha, Khattri, Bania, Kori and Bhangsi are mainly of urban origin.

The different professions were classified according to the class concept of Karl Marx: "Capitalists" the heterogeneous "middle class" and the working class were distinguished. The inhabitants were asked how they distinguish between the different categories of work. They have a twofold classification, distinguishing between white collar workers and blue collar workers with an intermediary indistinct category. Only 10 professions were classified contrary to the class concept. Those were the badly paid "middle class" jobs which demand little education. Although urban professions are "caste neutral", one surprising result of the study was that only 43% of all heads of the households work in professions which have no resemblance with their traditional caste professions. This congruence between traditional and urban profession can be explained through the selectivity of the migration process. As most of Maheshganj's inhabitants are of rural origin, they only migrate to town when they find a job which suits their status aspirations. The upper castes only stay in town when they get into a white collar job. The untouchables achieve a job as permanent industrial worker. Temporary workers and riksawallas only work in town for a few months and return to their village. The relationship to the village is not loosened. The Jaisvara who have been working for generations in town maintain their link to the village as it has an important function in case of illness, unemployment and old age.

The attitude to village and town is ambivalent. The village is seen as the moral universe whereas in town money and selfishness reign. But one is also fascinated by the distractions of town life. Especially the untouchables cherish their newly won urban freedom which makes them reject any effort by the upper castes to bind them in personal service relationships.

The fifth chapter deals at length with the family structure in Maheshganj ahata. Authors like Gore (1968), Ross (1961) and Kolenda (1968) claimed that urbanization and industrialization leads to the formation of nuclear families, whereas Shah (1973) has shown that joint families were more frequent in town. In Maheshganj ahata the most frequent family type is the nuclear family. Fiftyone percent of all households are nuclear families, 11% are joint families and 38% are incomplete families. This corresponds with the findings of Vatuk (1972) and Holmström (1968) in their urban samples, who found a high percentage of nuclear families. A surprising result is that the joint family is more frequent among untouchables than among upper castes. Cohn (1955, 1958) has shown that the joint family is the cultural ideal of the rural Jaisvara, but that demographical,

economical and social reasons prevent the formation of joint families (Cohn 1964). This is not the fact in town. The constitution of joint families among Jaisvara Camar depends on the life cycle and not so much on the economic situation. Urban migration also does not lead automatically to the constitution of joint families in the village. On the other hand the upper caste families follow the cultural ideal of the nuclear family. Within the nuclear family the wife has more freedom, a more egalitarian relationship between husband and wife and affective relationships between parents and children develop. Formally upper caste women practice parda, but actually they are the ones who decide most of the household matters.

Cohn describes the independent and equal status of rural Jaisvara women, which is due to the fact that they earn their own living as field labourers. The status of urban Jaisvara women has changed considerably. They practice parda and those Jaisvara women who are forced to work are looked down upon. The urban Jaisvara follow the former upper caste model of segregation and subjugation of women. But traits of their old freedom are still maintained: Love marriages among Jaisvara are much more easily accepted than among upper castes.

The urban Jaisvara do not practice child marriage as did their rural brethren. The marriage rites are elaborate and follow the pattern of a Kayastha marriage. The Jaisvara are served by a Brahmin during minor marriage rites, but the marriage itself is conducted by the Jaisvara agua- marriage broker- and the Jaisvara women. This is a conscious rejection of "Sanskritization" on the part of the Jaisvara who 40 years ago used to call a Brahmin to conduct the basic marriage ritual. But other features of the marriage are sanskritized: The silver jewellery for the bride has been replaced by gold jewellery, only vegetarian food is served during the wedding and the veneration for the Camar goddess Parmasvari Devi is shown by the offering of pepper, camphor, lime and clove.

Although the inhabitants of Maheshganj ahata claim that their ward is exogamous in analogy to the village, the rule of exogamy is overridden in 16% of all cases. Fortyone families are related through mother, sister, daughter and wife. This finding corresponds with Vatuk's discovery of a stronger bilateral emphasis of the urban kinship system. Among the Christians in Maheshganj, one can nearly speak of matrilineal families with strong female dominance and residence rules which respect the female line.

Chapter six describes the system of social stratification and social conflict in the ahata. The Brahmin is still considered to occupy the highest rank in the caste hierarchy and the Bhangi the lowest. According to Dumont's caste theory the structural principle of the caste system which consists in the opposition between pure and

impure is still maintained. But giving and taking of different kinds of food, services and impurities does not take place any longer. Food categories have changed their meaning, service relationships between upper castes and untouchables do not exist any longer and impurities are removed by the upper castes themselves. The second criteria for rank attribution is derived from the varna model, and the third is the economic position of those castes which could not be classified according to their ritual rank. But much more important than the differential ordering of castes is the distinction between two different strata. Maheshganj's inhabitants distinguish between an upper strata and a lower strata. To the upper strata belong the first three varnas Brahmin, Ksatriya and Vaisya, the upper castes Kayastha and Khattri, the regional castes, Jaines and Christians and those middle castes of the Sudra varna which are in white collar jobs. To the lower strata belong all untouchables and those middle castes of the Sudra varna which are in blue collar jobs. A combination of caste rank and job status explains the stratification model.

Upper strata and lower strata have different norms, festivals and institutions. The upper strata cherish the norm of homely life whereas for the lower strata, especially the Jaisvara the solidarity with the biradari is of utmost importance. Political leaders are mistrusted by both strata but they are used differently. Political leaders have a dominant position among the upper strata, whereas the lower strata follow their respectable elder Raja Ram panditji.

Residential segregation in town is only partly maintained. Untouchables and upper caste people do live together in the so called "mixed lanes" in Maheshganj ahata. Water is drawn from the same water pipe by upper castes and untouchables. There is one temple in Maheshganj which belongs exclusively to the upper castes, and one temple which belongs to the untouchables. These two temples are both served by Brahmins. The upper castes have a purohit of their own, the untouchables are also served by a Brahmin who would- due to his function as untouchable priest- not be called by the upper castes. Upper strata and lower strata ignore each other; only in two situations do they seek each other's support: In case an untouchable has to deal with police, administration and bureaucracy they ask the upper strata politicians and respectable people for help. During election time the upper strata politicians are eager to get the votes of the untouchables. The untouchables usually vote autonomously but collectively for a party of their choice. Many untouchables are members of the communist trade union; they sympathize with the Republican Party of India but usually give their support to that party which has the greatest prospect to win. The rationale is "that they don't want to waste their votes", as they explain this voting behaviour themselves.

The veneration for the untouchable saints Ravidas and Siv Narain is the topic of the seventh chapter. Kanpur's untouchables were subjected to nearly the same influences as Agra's Jatavs- as they are described by Lynch (1969,1972). Only the outcome of those ideological manifestations and political movements is different. Kanpur's different untouchable castes and subcastes are all hierarchically ranked. Each caste and subcaste followed their own parochial saints and had their own rites and religious traditions. The veneration for Siv Narain was only shared by Khatik, Dusiah and Jaisvara. The first Siv Narain gurdwara was already constructed in 1870 by a rich Khatik contractor. The Arya Samaj had a strong impact on Kanpur's untouchable castes as well. Under Arya Samaj influence, a number of untouchable castes changed their myths of origin and claimed upper caste status. This movement lasted till 1920 and was followed by the vigorous preaching of Swami Achutanand for an untouchable unity.

Swami Achutanand was a Jatav Camar who was educated by the Arya Samaj; in 1921 he came to Kanpur and founded the "Adi Hindu Mahasabha" whose principles were the uplifting of all untouchable castes in Kanpur. The foundation of the Ravidas temple in 1923 goes back to his initiative. Since then the veneration for Ravidas has become the unifying bond for all untouchable castes in Kanpur. The yearly procession organized on Ravidas' birthday is followed by all of them. Each untouchable mohalla sends out a delegation to participate in this same procession. In contrast to Agra, the Republican Party and Neobuddhism never had a strong impact. This is due to the industrial climate in Kanpur which dominates the untouchable politico-religious movement. The model which Dr. Ambedkar, the founder of the Republican Party and the Neobuddhist movement, represents is more eagerly followed by Kanpur's middle class untouchables. The untouchable industrial worker prefers the model which is set up by Ravidas.

In the village the Jaisvara were members of the Siv Narain sect and followers of Ravidas. The Siv Narain sect is described by Cohn as the main agent of Sanskritization in the village. The veneration for Ravidas had stronger political overtones. In town Siv Narain has lost his importance. Only old-fashioned and less educated Jaisvara are members of the Siv Narain society. The political youth are followers of Ravidas and they organize the celebration on Ravidas' birthday which is done in great style. This shift of emphasis cannot be explained by the content of the Siv Narain and Ravidas legend but by their caste background. The two saints were followers of the bhakti movement. They fought against caste discrimination and were for the uplifting of the poor, downtrodden and suppressed. Siv Narain was a Thakur and Ravidas was a Camar; he worked as a cobbler and he never denied that he was a Camar although he acquired great virtues by his

loving devotion to God. Maheshganj's Jaisvara have acquired a new self confidence through their comparatively secure and rewarding jobs as permanent industrial workers. They are not any longer in personal bondage to their former employers- the Thakur. They reject following a Thakur saint as they have a saint of their own. The veneration of Ravidas is a rejection of Sanskritization and an outcome of a newly-won self confidence of the Jaisvara: They are proud to be Camar.

The eighth chapter deals again with caste and class consciousness in urban India. Dumont's caste theory holds true as far as the ramifications of the caste system are concerned and Marx's class concept can also be verified as there is an overall correspondence between the class concept and the ranking of professions in Mahehganj. This leads to the paradoxical situation that two contradictory theories explain the very same urban reality. Besides, the two theories are complementary in their application. Those aspects of urban reality which are contradictory to the respective theory can be subsumed through the process of dialectical mediation under the respective theory. Whether ideology is subsumed under economy or vice versa depends on the basic assumption: For Dumont the "cloak of our virgin Mary" shelters the fact that those castes of dubious ritual status are subsumed under the higher strata, whereas from a Marxist point of view one can retreat to the notion of false consciousness to explain why the Brahmin industrial worker belongs to the upper strata, whereas the untouchable white collar professional belongs to the lower strata.

The complementarity of two seemingly "contradictory" theories can be explained by a common shortcoming of Dumont and Marx: These two theories are an outcome of western dualistic thinking, which is, according to Marriott, in contrast with Indian monistic thinking. West and East do not differ because the West is economic and the East ideological- as Dumont assumed- but insofar as the West needs complicated processes of dialectical mediation to solve the contradiction between ideology and economy, whereas the East sees the economic and ideological aspect in each situation, act and actor together. The situational evaluation of sakti is twofold: The substance of the actor is taken into consideration as well as the respective act. According to the different importance of actor and act seemingly contradictory strategies of Westernization, Sanskritization and Compartmentalization are used which correspond with the four models of status maximization derived from the varna model. Trade union consciousness exists as well as factionalism. The Jaisvara have developed a caste consciousness because they are industrial workers.

LEBENS LAUF

Am 23. Juni 1948 wurde ich als drittes Kind der Ärzte Dr. med. Werner Bellwinkel und Dr. med. Erika Bellwinkel, geb. Leupold, geboren. Im Jahre 1954 wurde ich in die Volksschule in Bad Godesberg eingeschult. Von 1958 bis 1960 besuchte ich die Melanchthon-Schule in Kurhessen-Waldeck. Von 1960 bis 1962 besuchte ich ein Gymnasium in Bad Godesberg, und von 1962 bis 1967 ging ich auf das Neusprachliche Mädchengymnasium in Hamburg Groß-Flottbek. Meine Schulzeit schloß ich mit dem Abitur am 7. Februar 1967 ab.

Von 1967 bis 1968 machte ich ein studium generale am Leibniz-Kolleg der Universität Tübingen; zum Wintersemester 1967/68 immatrikulierte ich mich in den Fächern Soziologie, Philosophie und Volkswirtschaft.

Von 1968 bis 1972 studierte ich am Südasien Institut und Institut für Soziologie und Ethnologie der Universität Heidelberg die Fächer Soziologie, Ethnologie, Neuere Indische Geschichte und Hindi. Am 16. Mai 1972 erhielt ich den Grad eines Magister Artium von der Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Universität Heidelberg im Hauptfach Ethnologie mit den Nebenfächern Indische Geschichte und Soziologie. Die Magisterarbeit behandelte das Thema: "Das indische städtische Proletariat".

Von 1972 bis 1974 war ich Stipendiat des Deutschen Akademischen Austauschdienstes und der Indischen Regierung. Ich war am Department of Sociology, Delhi University, Indien immatrikuliert und führte während dieser Zeit eine Feldforschung unter unberührbaren Industriearbeitern in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, Indien durch.

Von 1974 bis 1977 war ich Doktorand am Seminar für Ethnologie der Universität Zürich. Während dieser Zeit hatte ich zwei Lehraufträge am Seminar für Ethnologie der Universität Zürich und zwei Lehraufträge an der Universität Heidelberg. Am 8. Juli 1977 habe ich das Doktor-examen an der Philosophischen Fakultät I der Universität Zürich bestanden.

Von 1977 bis 1978 nahm ich ein postdoktorales Stipendium der University of Chicago, USA und des Deutschen Akademischen Austauschdienstes wahr. Ich war am Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago immatrikuliert.

Von 1979 bis 1980 arbeitete ich als Referentin beim Planungsstab der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kirchlicher Entwicklungsdienst in Stuttgart. Im Juli 1979 heiratete ich Herrn Martin H. Schempp und führe seitdem den Namen Maren Bellwinkel-Schempp. Seit März 1980 habe ich das Referat Familienhilfe beim Diakonischen Werk der EKD in Stuttgart, BRD übernommen.

